

Press release from Jan de Beer, cell 082 456 3677:

COATINGS INDUSTRY FACING MAJOR SKILLS CRISIS, SAPMA WARNS

The South African coatings industry is facing a technical skills crisis, Deryck Spence, executive director of the SA Paint Manufacturing Association (SAPMA), has warned.

Spence says the industry, already desperately short of qualified paint chemists and technicians, is facing unprecedented problems caused by the fact that:

- As much as 80% of the Skills Levy paid by members of the coatings industry is being siphoned off for free education at universities;
- The other 20% is being awarded to Skills Education Training Authorities (SETAs) which are not promoting skills for budgetary reasons. “The SA Paint Industry Training Association (SAPITI), the sole provider of training for the coatings industry, has had its strategic and vital government grant rejected because of a lack of funds,” Spence explained;
- The shortage of skills is resulting in local manufacturers having to rely on private paint consultants or imported specialists whose numbers – particularly from India – are rapidly increasing to occupy positions South Africans should have filled;
- The level of internal training within the coatings sector has plunged drastically because manufacturers are having to pay twice for training: in the first place for the compulsory government skills levy, and then also for their own training programmes. “The result is that many manufacturers have simply put a halt to any training initiative or support for SAPITI courses.”
- The SETAs are now concentrating on providing training for the unemployed instead of raising skills among those employed in the manufacturing sector. “The decree that a large percentage of government funding for training must go to jobless people is a futile move. No sooner have these unemployed people been trained than they become private entrepreneurs and leave the industry. The policy is totally disproportionate to the South Africa’s training requirements.”

Spence added: “There is simply no encouragement, promotion or it would seem interest from the government in helping this country produce the skilled paint technicians it needs,” Spence adds.

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